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Residence 50

Attn: Executive Director, Resource Assessments and Business Systems
Planning Services,
Department of Planning and Environment,
GPO Box 39,
SYDNEY NSW 2001

**Re: Amended Development Application
Rye Park Wind Farm
SSD 6693**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a response to the Amended Development Application by Rye Park Renewable Energy Pty Ltd, a fully owned subsidiary of Trustpower Australia (New Zealand) Ltd for the development of the Rye Park Wind Farm (SSD 6693).

I am discouraged that my request to you for an extension to this submission period was not granted, given the large numbers of documents that have been amended by the new developer, Trustpower Australia (New Zealand) Ltd, who have submitted the amended EA under the new company name Rye Park Renewable Energy Pty Ltd. Throughout the remaining objection I may refer to the developer/proponent as "Trustpower" or "TP" and the proposed Rye Park Wind Farm development as "the wind farm" or WF.

Having submitted an objection to the Epuron "Rye Park Wind Farm EA" in 2014, along with over 106 other "public" objectors, I am disappointed that the project has been allowed to proceed, as 84 of the "objections" came from the immediate neighbouring area to the proposed Wind Farm. In comparison, of the eight "support" submissions, five were from the neighbouring area. That there were also 12 times as many "public objectors" as there were "supporters" to the original EA, should indicate clearly to the Department of Planning that the overwhelming majority of this community does not support this development and there were significantly greater number of objections to the Rye Park Wind Farm proposal than to the recently determined Yass Valley Wind Farm. Again, most of the objectors live in the immediate vicinity of the RPWF.

This further reinforces the statistics from the 2014 Rye Park meeting where the overwhelming majority of a town meeting voiced their opposition to the Wind Farm development.

A more recent town meeting on October 9th 2015, to discuss wind farm developments across the Yass Valley Region, again reinforced the feeling of the local community when 99% of the attendees indicated that they did not want Wind Farm developments in the region. There were 165 people in attendance at the meeting, which was addressed by NSW Parliament Member for Goulburn, Pru Goward and Federal Member for Hume, Angus Taylor, as well as wind turbine hosts and neighbours.

In March, a Petition signed by 1176 people was tabled to the NSW Government, to "ban Wind Farms from The Southern Tablelands and Southwest Slopes", further evidence that significant numbers of the broader community are objecting to WF developments in this area. Of the signatories, over half were from the Yass Valley region, with over 350 being from the collective townships and villages of Yass, Blakney Creek, Bango, Rye Park, and Boorowa – all areas that will be directly impacted by the Rye Park Wind Farm. Additional to this, was a similar Petition to "Stop the Wind Farms in the Southern Tablelands", that was stolen from the 2014 Rye Park Community Meeting. It contained approximately 500 signatures at the time.

Having read only some of the Response to Submissions and the amended EA, due to the short time frame, I would like to make the following comments:

Executive Summary

TP states that the proponent is looking for “the best possible outcome....for the...local communities.” Pg 9 Executive Summary. Clearly this is not the case, when it dismisses the concerns and comments of those objecting to the WF. Their offers of financial compensation to neighbours within 2km, reinforces their belief that opposition is based on financial disgruntlement, which is not the case.

Land Values

Since my 2014 submission, I have learnt that each of the three neighbours to the North and my newest neighbour to the west, all bought their property without being told by the vendor or agent about the Wind Farm, and paid a higher premium than they may have, had they known the WF was in development. If the agent/vendor had told them about the WF, they would not have paid the same price or may not have purchased at all.

In my own case, we were not told about the WF and paid what we considered a reasonable price for a good property with a fabulous view, and a wind monitoring tower within the view to the East of the property.

We would not have paid the same price had we known turbines were going to be of the vista, or in deed bought the property at all. This alone demonstrates that whilst land values may not decline as expressed by TP, the price that a purchaser is prepared to pay, may be significantly less.

If Wind Farms don't have an impact on the ability to sell the property, as is stated in the EA, why didn't the agent/vendor tell us or our neighbours about the WF?

At the Yass Town Meeting, October 2015, local Real Estate agent Michael Gray, addressed the meeting on this issue, indicating that WF would have an impact on saleability of a property. Whilst this is not technically the same as Land Value, as described by the NSW Valuer General, it is the overwhelming belief of the community that a view of a WF or plans for WF in the local area, will reduce the sale price of a property, be it rural or otherwise. Questions at the October 2015 town meeting raised concerns about the inability to sell land in proximity to the WF, which owners had planned to use to self-fund their retirement, so as not to burden the Government as age pensioners.

The NSW Valuer Generals Land Value, does not take into account improvements made to the property by the owner over time. Therefore the Land itself may not appreciate significantly over the period of the WF, but other enhancements made by the owner have a significant impact on the potential sale price. These enhancements include buildings, fencing, pasture improvements, road and infrastructure, planting of trees/windbreaks, stockyards, sheds etc. The proximity to the WF, (proposed or constructed) may be such a distraction, that the owner is forced to reduce the selling price to ensure the sale. This is currently the case in the Crookwell/Grabben Gullen area where real estate advertisements are increasingly mentioning whether turbines can or cannot be seen from the listed properties, (see Ad to right).



The situation at Bald Rock, Victoria, where Local Council has reduced rates in recognition of reduced land values demonstrates the belief that WF impact negatively on land values is changing. “Value of land cut by wind farms” by Pia Ackerman, *The Australian*, Feb 1, 2013.¹

Additionally, Upper Lachlan Shire Mayor, John Shaw, also indicated in 2013 that the significant number of WF applications in the Upper Lachlan Shire was having a negative impact on land values: “Land values in the shire have actually decreased because of the amount of wind farms in the area,” he said in an article in the *Goulburn Post* “Turbines at saturation point”, Antony Dubber, Jul 21st, 2013.² The Rye Park Wind Farm is situated within the Upper Lachlan Shire at our property, therefore the Mayors comments are pertinent to us directly.

Finally, a new real estate agent in Yass, has indicated that the prospect of wind farms is already having an impact on the sale-ability of property around Yass. His written statement to that effect can be supplied if required.

Whilst much is made of the 2009 study and its findings in the Trustpower RTS and Amended EA, it is now 7 years since that study and there are many more turbines and wind farms close to towns, villages and individual residences than in 2009. A new independent study needs to be funded to determine the current state of play with regard to property values. Certainly the belief amongst locals is that the Wind Farm will have a adverse impact on house prices and ability to be able to sell property at the price it is worth, before the development was announced.

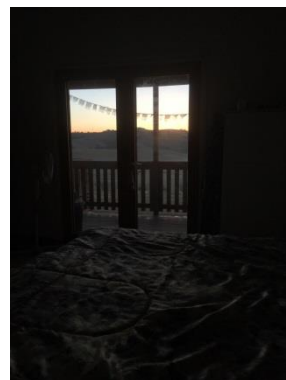
Visual Impact

A photo montage to the East of my property, Residence 50, was provided three months after request, well after the submission period had ended. It clearly shows that we will be impacted at the highest scale with the closest turbines being 1600m away, or 1500m if accurate micro-siting occurs.

No photomontage was provided of view to the south of our property despite a request, so that we could assess the cumulative visual impact.

What size turbines and blades are in the photomontages provided?

The RTS indicates (pg 33, Turbine Construction) that the rotor diameter will be 90-130m depending on the turbine chosen and the hub height will be from 80-101m. Whilst the maximum height of 157m is mandatory, TP have told us at both private and CCC meetings that the turbines won't be chosen until after approval is given. Without knowing the actual length of the blade and the height of the tower, the photomontages are meaningless. With a potential diameter of 130m the blades would be only 27 meters above the ground. Photo at right, shows view to the Range from the bedroom at dawn, May 7th 2016. The view from the kitchen looks at the same aspect.



Visual mitigation at the site of our house will be difficult, if not impossible. As the Amended Visual Impact Assessment now indicates that we will experience High visual impact, Trustpower offered us financial compensation for visual impact which we have rejected. No amount of money would compensate to the loss of views for the next 20-25 years, once the WF is built.

The usual mitigation proposal for most people experiencing significant visual impact to "just plant some trees" demonstrates a great ignorance of the local conditions and climate which reduces the growing season to just 4 months a year, and the need for the trees to already be approximately 5 metres tall at planting time to have any screening effect in the short term. If planting trees were to be acceptable mitigation, who would bear the cost for watering the trees whilst they become established and maintaining them to ensure their growth? Is the proponent going to visit every 2-3 days during summer to do weed and water the trees to ensure screening occurs? And where is the water going to come from? It shouldn't be the land-holders responsibility.



My question to TP regarding the visual impact of the full moon rising behind the turbines remains un-answered and I do not appreciate that the Visual Impact consultant scoffed at this suggestion during the Rye Park Information Session, without knowing the location of my house and its aspect. Photo to right shows full moon in May 2016, rising above the ridge, near the monitoring tower.

Concerns about visual impact do not just arise from the house site, but will be felt across the whole property as the ridgeline dominates the east view and we work across the whole property, not just inside the house. My partner in particular works many hours on the property and it was to be our retirement property where we would spend the majority of our days and nights.



Visual impact is also of concern at a number of significant sites along the wind farm:

1. Rye Park Public School – students will be exposed to large number of turbines at this site. My concern as an educator is that the distraction during construction, but especially during operation, will have a significant impact on learning. Again this cannot be tested until the turbines are in place, by which stage it may be too late.
2. Intersection of Cooks Hill Rd and Rye Park Road – Turbines 96, 97, 98, 99 and 101 will be immediately opposite the intersection and will pose a distraction to drivers, especially around dawn, with the sun rising behind them.

The proposed Bango Wind Farm to the West of our property (turbines proposed to be 192m high) would further add to the impact experienced by us during and after construction.

Noise Impact

It is known that Wind Farms generate audible noise during operation. The noise proposed at our premises will be significant due to the proximity and number of turbines close to our residence. The inaudible noise (or infrasound) is also of concern. Pressure pulsing will be significant this close to the wind farm, and I am advised that the smaller the room, the worse the effect. Therefore it may be impossible to work from home as I am currently doing. How then, do I earn an income?

Noise impact will not only be experienced inside our home, but also in workshops and other buildings on the property. The audible noise from the blades will be apparent across the property both inside and outside of buildings as I have experienced this on my step daughters workplace at Bannister, near the Gullen Range Wind Farm, where the turbines were approximately 3 kilometres away.

To learn this past week that the Bango Wind Farm will propose turbines 192m tall will add further impact from a noise perspective. I am not convinced that the Cumulative Noise Impact study by Sonus in the RTS can be believed when they did not disclose the planned turbines. It seems convenient that all their testing shows that the noise impact is within the limits.

Construction

I continue to have concerns about the construction of the wind farm and its subsequent increase in traffic will have detrimental impact on our local road surfaces, road users, and wildlife.

We have just come through one of the driest periods that locals have seen, causing the Upper Lachlan Shire to cease road maintenance on the unsealed roads in our area for some months. Given the increased demand for water during construction, I object on the grounds that there will be increased pressure on public water supply which may be called upon for primary production as well as domestic use. Again TP would not commit at the CCC to where water would be sourced, claiming it would be up to the contractor. Suggestions that it will come from Yass Dam would not be seen favourably with the townsfolk of Yass, especially if they were to be placed on water restrictions. They do not seem to realise that this could impact on them, despite efforts to inform the community as the clever naming of the Rye Park Wind Farm, has meant that the majority of the Yass population believe the WF to be 40km away, not the 5km that the closest turbines will be to the town.

I continue to have great concern about the erosion that the construction of the wind farm will cause, not only at the site of each turbine, but along the access roads, and from the trenching for the underground powerlines. The land in the area is very fragile and needs to be retained as it is. Erosion on our own property is an example of how uncontrollable this land is. Therefore I urge the Department of Planning to seek the advice of locals who have experience and expertise in working in the local area, as there are no guarantees that the contractors employed by the proponent will care enough to ensure they minimise harm to the environment.

Biodiversity

Concerns remain over the impact to native fauna and flora during the construction and operation phases of the WF. Personal sightings of a range of birds on and from our property include the Superb Parrot, Swift Parrot and Wedge-tail Eagle. The potential for harm from the turbines as well as construction traffic cannot be mitigated effectively.

The increased traffic (76 movements per day) will have a detrimental impact on wildlife. The proposed work hours of 7am-6pm will mean workers will be travelling the local roads often around dawn and dusk, when animals are usually on the move.

The photos below are of echidna, Wedge-Tailed Eagle and Olive Legless Lizard, all taken on the Property of Residence 50.



Of great concern and a strange irony is that the land which will host the turbines to the east of us, and will also host the access track to the range for construction and maintenance, also a test site for the propagation of the endangered species, the Southern Pygmy Perch. The dam used for this propagation is within full view of my house and will be only a short distance from the proposed access road. I cannot find mention of this in the Amended Biodiversity Assessment, although it does say that impacts on the species are “manageable”. An article from the Department of Primary Industries confirming the stocking of the fish in the dam on “Rocky Ridge” is attached, *“Farmer helping to save threatened fish”*. DPI, 26th May 2015.³

Since the 2014 submission period, we have planted 1000 native trees in an effort to increase habitat for native birds and to improve the ecosystems across our property. We gained the support of the Boorowa Local Land Services to achieve this and won a grant to assist with costs. This agreement demonstrates the importance that the Local Land Services holds on creating good habitat across all areas. The tree corridors on our property will allow birds to move across to the range to the East.

Additionally, a group of 40 volunteers from the North Sydney Bush-care group helped with some of the planting. The group has been visiting Boorowa for 16 years to assist landowners with planting large stands of trees in an direct attempt to ensure continued habitat to ensure the survival of the Superb Parrot. They are organised and hosted by the Boorowa Landcare group, (who should also be opposed to the wind farm, but sit on the fence, as a number of their group are hosting turbines.) During their visit to our property in September 2015, a number of the city group expressed dismay that the Wind Farm could destroy the hollow bearing trees in an afternoon, and it would be another hundred years before the trees they planted would be useful to the Superb Parrot. They questioned how this type of environmental decision making could be allowed?

Economic Benefit

The RTS comments on Economic benefit to community – but it’s using Tax Payers money to do it. How is this for the greater good? Federal MP Angus Taylor quoted that the Wind Farm Company will be paid \$500 000 per turbine per year from the Government, which would amount to \$1 090 000 000 over the life of the Wind Farm. This figure seems to have been omitted from Trustpowers economic balance sheet, as has reference to the LRET scheme that the company would benefit from. As a company with its base in NZ, I am opposed to this development sending our own taxes overseas, having impacted negatively on the lifestyles of the local community.

Traffic and Transport

The current state of the local roads is poor. TP indicates that roads are in adequate condition for their use “fit for purpose” and would not require improvement before construction. I challenge that the volume of traffic will significantly deteriorate all public roads accessing the wind, be they used by WF vehicles, or public vehicles avoiding the WF construction site, increasing use on other back roads.

I acknowledge that the RTS indicates that some roads will be upgraded to suit the increase in number and the type of transport needed, but do not have faith that the roads will be maintained once construction starts. Increased traffic and the lack of experience of country roads will inevitably see increased accidents, incidents and potential for serious if not fatal consequences for both wildlife, livestock and humans.

Heritage Assessment

What thought has been given to the historical and spiritual significance of the Rye Park Cemetery, which has been the resting place of generations of mostly non-Aboriginal but some Aboriginal people? It is not mentioned in the Heritage assessment.

With significant turbines potentially overlooking the Cemetery, it will no longer be a place of reflection and comfort for remaining family members when burying or visiting the graves of their loved ones. As one head stone in the Cemetery reads "I lift my eyes up to the hills" demonstrates the deep attachment the community members hold with the unchanged landscape. I object to the Wind Farm on their behalf.

It appears that much of the Aboriginal Assessment is a copy of the 2013 document by the same company, who also happens to have done assessment for the Bango Wind Farm and Yass Valley Wind Farm. Given the 22 months to improve the report, this has again been given scant regard.

Given the comments in Objection No. 104555, I question why Mr Bell was not directly approached to assist in the Amended Assessment? His concerns have been dismissed with a general statement in the RTS as discussed further below.

Community Consultation

Since buying the project from Epuron, Trustpower has indicated its' intent to have good relations with the Community, certainly better than those that Epuron had.

I have not found this to be the case. Apart from a letter sent to us, as respondents to the EIS, we have had to seek out Trustpower for further information.

When attending the Public Information Session at the Rye Park Hall on September 22, 2015, I arrived at 6.30pm, having driven 4 hours from Sydney to attend. I was surprised to be greeted at the door by a Security Guard and my immediate thought was that it was an antagonistic measure.

Once inside, it was apparent that there was no longer an Information session, and this was confirmed by a worker for Trustpower, indicating that there "had been some trouble" and that the displays were being removed and packed. I was only able to look quickly at a map and speak briefly to the visual Impact consultant, before we were asked to leave the building.

When follow-up meetings were requested, the same posters and information were not able to be provided, so I do not believe that the company have adequately completed Community Consultation and have tarnished the reputation of the Rye Park community in their media coverage of the event, which certainly is neither the "best possible outcome" nor "good relations" with the community. It is more disappointing that press releases about the incident remain on the Wind Farm website.

When asked at the CCC how many residents there were within 2km, Mr Michael Head explained that Google Earth had been used to determine how many residences were neighbouring the wind farm. This type of "desktop analysis" has been used throughout the Response to Submissions and is not acceptable for a project of this scale. How can the Proponent be certain that they have included every dwelling, and certainly whether those dwellings are occupied? And if they have only done a desktop study, how can they know how many people reside in each residence? It would appear from our own enquiries that a number of landowners who will host turbines, do not reside on the involved land themselves.

Having looked at a number of sections of the RTS document, I am concerned at the many small errors throughout it. Repetition of basic information in each section, due to the large number of consultants being employed to write the documents, meant that it was difficult to find the details. It would appear that a number of these consultant firms, are wind farm specialists, and whilst that may be a benefit to the Proponent, it raises concerns about the thoroughness of the reports. Of concern, is the number of errors in the important details including road names, creek names, significant errors on a variety of maps, especially when pinpointing residences. If these errors exist in a document that took 22 months to prepare, how can we trust that anything in the construction, operation and decommissioning process will be done properly?

Finally, in my opposition to this development, I reject the Response to Submissions, as the Public Objections have not been responded to with the same integrity as the Public Supporters or the Responses from Government and Agencies. It appears that for the convenience of the Proponent, they have chosen to group Public Objectors concerns together, and used a “cut and paste” approach to cover all the concerns. It has been a difficult task to find whether all concerns have been addressed and the flippant manner in which the Proponent has responded to them, does not justify the 22 months that it has taken to table the Response, but is further testimony of the way in which the Proponent has treated the local community since taking over the development.

The introduction of 109 turbines of the size and scale proposed for the Rye Park Wind Farm, together with the associated infrastructure, would have an urbanising effect and would significantly change the character of the entire area. Its impact socially has already split this community and will continue to do so. For the good of the community aesthetically, physically, mentally, economically and environmentally the Amended Development Application SSD 6693 for the Rye Park Wind Farm, should not be approved.

Yours sincerely,
Christine Hawkins

References

1 Value of land cut by wind farms

Credit: Pia Akerman | The Australian | February 01, 2013 | www.theaustralian.com.au ~~

A Victorian council has conceded that a wind farm development still in its early stages has slashed the land value of its neighbours, and agreed their land rates should be cut.

In what is believed to be an Australian first, South Gippsland shire council has amended the rates notice for one neighbour of the Bald Hills wind farm project, which is yet to erect any of its 52 planned turbines.

The move is being cited as a victory by wind farm opponents, who claim the visual impact and noise of turbines, as well as possible health effects, drive down land values for neighbours.

South Gippsland Council chief executive Tim Tamlin said the value of a property adjacent to the Bald Hills site at Tarwin Lower, 170km southeast of Melbourne, was considered different from surrounding farm blocks because it was a coastal block bought for "lifestyle purposes".

"This person, from what I can understand, paid a premium when they purchased it," Mr Tamlin said.

"They're saying, 'Hey, this isn't fair now there's a wind farm and I'm not going to be able to sell it to the market at that value any more'.

"We've gone and had a look and said 'Yeah, that's actually a fair call, you're not going to get that any more', which is sad really because the money he is going to save on his rates is never going to compensate for the capital loss."

The neighbour, who declined to be named, has had his capital improved value assessment reduced by 32 per cent, from \$662,000 to \$450,000.

Mr Tamlin said the council had been "inundated" with other residents seeking similar reductions on their rates because of the wind farm. Cases would be assessed on their individual merits.

"One person 4km away has requested a rate review," he said. "If there is an impact on these properties and they don't (come forward and say) 'Hey, how about me', they will get picked up on the two-yearly (assessment) cycle if there is a change in their values."

Don Jelbart has owned property near the site since 1985 and now plans to make his own appeal to the council for a rate reduction based on lower land value.

"I bought more land in 2002 just before the wind farm raised its head, with the sole purpose of that land being our superannuation," Mr Jelbart said. "Once you put wind turbines there, the coastal value is removed."

Mr Jelbart and his neighbours estimate the wind farm development will wipe \$20 million from the value of nearby properties.

"Our land is being used as a buffer zone for an industrial site," he said.

The Bald Hills wind farm has had a turbulent history since it was first approved by the Victorian government in 2004.

Howard government environment minister Ian Campbell temporarily stymied the project two years later when he used the threatened status of the orange-bellied parrot to block the project, before reversing his position.

Amended planning guidelines introduced by the Baillieu government would stop the wind farm, if it were proposed now, because turbines fall within 2km of opposed residents, but the rules are not retrospective. Project owners Mitsui began road works at the site last August, but the first turbine is not expected to go up until September.

Real Estate Institute of Victoria policy and public affairs manager Robert Larocca said not enough properties near wind farms changed hands to assess whether the projects had an impact on land values.

"The data doesn't allow us to do that," he said. "A professional valuer may have their own individual point of view about a property, but at an overall level we are unable to discern the impact, negative or positive."

The British Valuation Office Agency, which decides council tax valuations, last year ruled wind turbines built near homes could sharply decrease their value, moving some homes into a lower council tax band.

Mark Burfield, who is awaiting turbine construction within 1km from his property, has already received a verbal knockback from South Gippsland council after asking for a rates adjustment.

He is trying to sell some of his property, receiving one offer for \$200,000 less than he advertised.

"The people came over, looked at the house and said 'That's fantastic'," Mr Burfield said. "I said: 'That's where the wind farm will go.' They went to see the wind farm manager, then came back and roasted the real estate agent."

"They said there is no way they were going to buy here and what a pity it was. I have \$2.5m worth of farmland, and right now its unsellable."

Source: Pia Akerman | The Australian | February 01, 2013 | www.theaustralian.com.au

2. Goulburn Post Turbines at 'saturation point' ANTONY DUBBER July 12, 2013, 9:50 a.m.

Upper Lachlan Shire has just received its 12th wind farm proposal. UPPER Lachlan Shire mayor John Shaw is concerned about the abundance of wind farms appearing in the area.

He is worried that the shire is starting to suffer from what he calls "wind farm overload". "Land values in the shire have actually decreased because of the amount of wind farms in the area," he said. "It's getting towards a bit of a saturation point now. "We didn't really want to get to the point where we would have a wind tower on every hill, but it's starting to get to that stage.

"I suppose I'm asking when is enough actually enough?" Mr Shaw says that this is now the 12th wind farm proposal for the Upper Lachlan area, with five already operating or under construction- the Crookwell 1,2 and 3 wind farms, the Cullerin Range farm 15kms east of Gunning, and the Acciona wind farm 20kms north east of Gunning.

Approval has also been granted for wind farms to be built at Taralga and Gullen Range near Collector. These farms could have close to 100 turbines operating on each property.

And now another new wind farm has been proposed approximately 8kms east of Biala, between Gunning and Grabben Gullen.

It will contain up to 40 turbines spread over 29 different allotments on two properties at a cost of \$30 million.

The farm will be developed by Newtricity, a renewable energy company based in Ireland since 2004 and who are now also a registered Australian owned company. They claim extensive experience with wind farm projects across Europe, the UK and North and South America.

The farm would also have transmission lines connected to the state grid that would either run through to Goulburn or be attached to the Gullen Range Wind Farm transformer currently under construction near Collector.

The turbine models are yet to be confirmed, but their estimated height would be between 130 and 150m from ground level to blade tip, and 80 to 100 metres to the top of the tower itself.

Newtricity would also build a substation and control buildings on the site, and has submitted its proposal and a preliminary environmental assessment to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure.

Environmental Resources Management Australia (ERM) through representative Adam Cockburn has been assisting Newtricity with community consultation, environmental impact statements and general project management involved in the planning and approval processes.

Mr Cockburn also gave details of the plans at a recent meeting of Upper Lachlan Shire Council on June 20.

Because the project is of state significance, it is up to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, not the Council to determine whether it gets approved.

The schedule for the wind farm's operation is for approval to be gained by mid 2014, with construction to take place over two years from 2015-2017.

Initially the farm will be operative for twenty years until 2037, and should be decommissioned by 2038.

Mr Cockburn has also suggested a 'drop in' session be held this Saturday July 13 with landholders and relevant agencies involved. A Community Consultative Committee will also be set up.

3. Farmers helping to save threatened fish



Department of Primary Industries, Luke Pearce, releasing relocated Southern Pygmy Perch into the refuge dam.

26 May 2015

Department of Primary Industries (DPI) staff have successfully relocated hundreds of Southern Pygmy Perch from Blakney Creek, just north of Yass, into two suitable farm dam habitats to create safe refuges for the threatened fish.

Recent surveys by DPI and the University of Canberra confirmed that the pest fish species Redfin Perch has migrated at least six kilometres upstream, since 2013, and are significantly threatening the Blakney Creek population of the endangered Southern Pygmy Perch.

DPI Senior Conservation Manager, Dr Trevor Daly said during the recent surveys DPI obtained evidence of direct predation of Southern Pygmy Perch by Redfin Perch.

"In areas where Redfin perch invade the Southern Pygmy Perch soon decline and disappear," Dr Daly said.

"The Southern Pygmy Perch were once widely distributed throughout the Murrumbidgee and Murray River Systems however there are now only three known remnant populations remaining in NSW

"To help protect the Southern Pygmy Perch population in Blakney Creek we have relocated 268 Southern Pygmy Perch into two suitable farm dam habitats and we are very grateful for landowner assistance with this essential and exciting project."

Allan Howard of 'Rocky Ridge', Blakney Creek said he and his wife were pleased their dams could be used to create refuges for the Southern Pygmy Perch.

"We are happy to assist with this important conservation work by allowing our dams to be stocked with rare native fish species," Mr Howard said.

The Southern Pygmy Perch in the Howards' dams will be monitored regularly and it is hoped they will breed and grow in numbers to the extent they can be stocked into other refuge areas in future.

The Department will investigate other suitable dam and waterway habitats within the Blakney Creek catchment where further potential refuges for Southern Pygmy Perch can be established with the support of local landowners.

There are heavy penalties for harming, possessing, buying or selling Southern Pygmy Perch, or for harming their habitat.